

PEOPLE (CHILDREN) SCRUTINY PANEL

29 November 2012

ADOPTION ANNUAL REPORT 2011-2012

Report of the Strategic Director for People

STRATEGIC AIM:	Creating a Brighter Future for All
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To update Scrutiny as to the developments in the Adoption Service and report on last year's activity.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That Scrutiny Panel note the contents of the Annual Report 2011-2012 (Appendix A) and the developments**

3. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 During 2010/11, the tri-partite Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland adoption arrangements changed and a new Leicestershire and Rutland Adoption Agency commenced in October 2011. Since the publication of the Government 'Action Plan for Adoption: Tackling Delay' and the introduction of a performance score card, the Agency has taken a range of actions to ensure improved performance in line with government expectations. These include introducing tracking meetings, an Adopters Charter and a local partnership with Coram who are an agency with a strong reputation for finding and approving suitable prospective adopters.
- 3.2 Under the new arrangements with Leicestershire, Rutland's contribution increased to £49,000 and enabled the Adoption team to recruit an additional social worker. In addition to homefinding, Leicestershire provide the full range of adoption services on our behalf including Adoption Panel and post – adoption support.
- 3.3 The numbers of children who are adopted in Rutland are so small that Rutland did not feature in the performance scorecard introduced earlier this year. However as the agency is joint with Leicestershire and there will be a sub- judgment in relation to adoption in the new Inspection Framework, Leicestershire's performance can have an impact on outcomes of future inspections. This year, Leicestershire showed a relatively good performance and is meeting the 2012/13 threshold for family finding and timescales for placing children for adoption, taking 590 days compared to the England average of 625 days. However the government has set new targets about timeliness so this performance needs to improve.

- 3.4** The Family Justice Review has made recommendations to speed up the care planning process for children to address some of the delays in adoption and nationally all cases will be tracked through a new care monitoring system with the aim of achieving completion within a 26 week period. Officers are attending the Family Justice Board and the local stakeholder group to ensure that Rutland is aware of these changes and contributing to any developments.
- 3.5** In the attached annual report, provided by Leicestershire County Council, it can be seen that there were 5 Rutland children placed for adoption last year. At present there are no children waiting for adoption. There are children where adoption is part of a 'parallel plan' which in lay terms is a contingency plan that is before the court. They are included in the Leicestershire tracking system as well as subject to Rutland's case management systems.
- 3.6** The Adoption Agencies (Panel and Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2012 came into force on 01 September 2012 which means that in most cases Adoption Panel will no longer be required to agree adoption plans for children and instead this will be the responsibility of the Agency Decision Maker. The purpose of this change is to speed up the adoption process. The new regulations place the quality assurance role on the panel adviser and agency decision maker. In Rutland we will use the Social Care Decisions panel which is chaired by the Agency Decision maker to fulfil the quality assurance role and ensure that there is no delay. These cases will already be known to panel as they will have been considered at Panel at other stages in the Care Planning process.
- 3.7** Based on the adoption activity in this financial year, the arrangements might not be considered 'value for money'. However, even with the reduced requirements around Adoption Panels, it would be difficult for Rutland to manage an Adoption agency and have its own Panel. There will be increased adoption activity in 2013/14 because of the children subject to parallel plans. In addition current Rutland families are receiving post adoption support which continues for 3 years after a child is adopted from the Agency.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	Low	Developments can be managed within existing timescales
Viability	Low	Developments can be managed within existing Service
Finance	Low	This is an expensive service.
Profile	High	Adoption has a high profile currently and is an inspection risk
Equality and Diversity	Medium	Need to ensure that the diverse needs of the population are met

Background Papers

None

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